

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 0229

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR PFOR GT BH UK

SUBJECT: BELIZE GOVERNOR'S VIEW OF STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH
GUATEMALA

1. IN CONVERSATION LAST FRIDAY, GOVERNOR MCENTEE GAVE ME HIS IM-
PRESSION OF PRESENT STATE OF UK-GUATEMALA NAGOTIATIONS. FOLLOWING
WERE MAIN POINTS:

A. TALKS ARE AT OR NEAR AN IMPASSE. GOG UNWILLING TO CONTEMPLATE
ANY OF SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES PROPOSED BY HMG TO CESSION OF TERRI-
TORY; HMG UNABLE TO CONSIDER CESSION OF SIZE GOG HAS IN MIND, AND
ALTHOUGH CONSIDERATION MIGHT BE GIVEN TO ASKING PREMIER PRICE TO
ACCEPT PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED SMALL CONCESSION, GOV THOUGHT IT
LIKELY PRICE WOULD FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL EVEN SMALL CESSION
TO BELIZEAN PUBLIC OWING TO 1) PUBLIC POSITION PREMIER HAS PRE-
VIOUSLY TAKEN ON THIS QUESTION 2) PRICE'S DECLINING POLITICAL
CLOUT AND 3) FACT THAT EXPLORATORY DRILLING FOR OIL IN SOUTH HAS
NOW BEGUN AND IS EXPECTED
TO CONTINUE FOR AT LEAST TWO OR THREE YEARS. IF PREMIER FELT HE
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COULD NOT SURVIVE REACTION TO EVEN A SMALL CESSION, HMG WOULD NOT
PRESS HIM TO ACCEPT. (LATER, IN CONTEXT OF DISCUSSION OF LOCAL
POLITICS, H. E. SAID HE HAD BEEN WORRIED ABOUT PREMIER'S
APPARENT LOSS OF SOVE OF HIS FORMER POLITICAL VIGOR IN RECENT
MONTHS.)

B. DESPITE IMPASSE, GOG RESISTING TERMINATION OF TALKS. HMG, ON

THE OTHER HAND, ABOUT READY TO URGE GOG TO AGREE TO MAKE JOINT REPORT TO UN THAT TALKS HAD FAILED. REPORT WOULD DESCRIBE CONCESSIONS EACH SIDE HAD BEEN WILLING TO CONSIDER.

C. COST OF RECENT REENFORCEMENT OF BRITISH FORCES HAD BEEN UNEXPECTEDLY HIGH AND WAS EXPECTED TO INCREASE FURTHER IN MONTHS AHEAD.

D. GOG IS NOW ACTIVELY SHOPPING FOR ARMS WITH MUCH MONEY TO SPEND AND WITHOUT PREVIOUS RESTRAINTS IMPOSED BY U. S. MILITARY PROCUREMENT PROGRAM. ANTICIPATED OUTCOME: ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY GUATEMALAN ARMED FORCES WHICH WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER BUILDUP OF BRITISH FORCES.

E. ABOVE HAD RESULTED IN INCREASED ATTENTION TO BELIZE PROBLEM AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL IN HMG AND INTENSIFICATION OF FEELING THAT AMONG DISTASTEFUL ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE, STATUS QUO WAS NOT ONLY THE MOST DISTASTEFUL BUT HAD BECOME TOTALLY INTOLERABLE.

F. HMG NOW CONSIDERING MOVES "TO FORCE A SOLUTION" OUTSIDE CONTEXT OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS.

G. SUCH MOVES MIGHT BE IMMINENT OR MIGHT BE A YEAR OR MORE AWAY. IN ANY CASE, THE U. S. WOULD BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE.

2. COMMENT: THE INFERENCE I DREW FROM THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS WAS THAT HE BELIEVED HMG HAD DECIDED TO GET OUT OF BELIZE AND THAT ONLY QUESTION REMAINING WAS TO CHOOSE THE LEAST DAMAGING WAYS OF ACCOMPLISHING THIS. (POSSIBLY RELATED TO HMG ATTITUDE AS DESCRIBED BY GOVERNOR IS PRIORITY BRITISH FORCES AND GOB ARE NOW GIVING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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CREATION OF A BETIZEAN ARMY. COLONEL HEAD, COMMANDER BRITISH FORCES TOLD ME SATURDAY THAT A COLONEL WOULD BE ARRIVING THIS WEEK TO TAKE ON THIS TASK AND THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE A STAFF OF EIGHT BRITISH OFFICERS.) GOV MCENTEE STRESSED THAT HIS REMARKS TO ME WERE IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTOOD I WOULD REPORT IT. I, THEREFORE URGE THAT NO REFERENCE TO HIS CONVERSATION BE MADE IN DISCUSSING THIS SUBJECT WITH BRITISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, IN WASHINGTON OR LONDON.
GAWF

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